

Resurrection of *Wrightia versicolor* S.T. Blake (Apocynaceae)

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Summary

Forster, Paul I. (1993). Resurrection of *Wrightia versicolor* S.T. Blake (Apocynaceae). *Austrobaileya* 4(1): 109–112. *Wrightia versicolor* S.T. Blake is reinstated as a species distinct from *W. pubescens* R. Br. The species is described, illustrated and notes on distribution, habitat and conservation status are given. A key to distinguish the Australian species of *Wrightia* is presented.

Keywords: Apocynaceae, *Wrightia versicolor*, *Wrightia* – Australia.

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Introduction

Wrightia versicolor was described by Blake (1948) from material that he collected at the Barrabas Scrub west of Ravenswood in north Queensland. Although Blake gave a detailed latin description, to date there has been no English description or illustration of this plant published. Ngan (1965), in his monograph of *Wrightia* R. Br., placed *W. versicolor* in the synonymy of *W. pubescens* subsp. *penicillata* (Bailey) Ngan, but gave no comment as to his reasons for doing this.

I am providing a treatment of the Apocynaceae (in part) for Volume 28 of 'Flora of Australia', hence it has been necessary to critically assess the validity of Ngan's taxonomic decisions with respect to the Australian taxa of *Wrightia*. After examining herbarium material of *Wrightia* in Australian herbaria and studying plants in habitat, I cannot agree with Ngan's synonymy with respect to *W. versicolor*. As noted by Blake (1948), *W. versicolor* is readily distinguished from *W. pubescens* by the glabrous foliage and cream-brown to orange flowers. *W. versicolor* grows into a large tree up to 20 m high with a diameter at breast height (d.b.h.) of up to 20 cm, whereas *W. pubescens* is a smaller tree up to 10 m high with a d.b.h. of up to 10 cm.

Terminology

Descriptive terminology follows that used in my previous revisionary papers on Apocynaceae (Forster 1992a,b,c,d,e). Indumentum refers to the covering of uniseriate, uncoloured, multicellular trichomes common to most Apocynaceae.

Taxonomy

Wrightia versicolor S.T. Blake, Proc. Roy. Soc. Queensl. 59: 163 (1948). **Type:** Queensland. NORTH KENNEDY DISTRICT: Barrabas Scrub, West of Ravenswood, 17 November 1942, S.T. Blake 14702 (holo: BRI!; iso: BRI!).

Tree to 20 m high, deciduous. Trunk \pm straight or crooked, with longitudinal channels and ridges; bark grey, scaly; blaze cream with darker stripes; latex copious, white. Leafy internodes angular, 5–30 mm long and up to 2 mm diameter, glabrous, lenticillate. Leaves petiolate; lamina broadly elliptic, elliptic to lanceolate, up to 130 mm long and 30 mm wide, discolorous, glabrous; upper surface dark glossy green with venation \pm obscure; lower surface pale green with 12–18 prominently raised yellow secondary veins per side of midrib and prominent reticulate tertiary venation; tip acute, short to long acuminate; base cuneate; petiole grooved along top, 8–10 mm long, 0.8–1 mm wide, glabrous. Cymes up to 15 mm long, comprising several fascicles of 3–8 flowers; peduncle 5–10 mm long, c. 1 mm diameter, glabrous; bracts lanceolate, 1–9 mm long, 0.8–2 mm wide,

glabrous or with scattered trichomes. Flowers 10–12 mm long, 20–23 mm diameter, with a musky-sweet scent; pedicels 5–10 mm long, 0.5–0.8 mm diameter, glabrous or with scattered to sparse indumentum. Sepals broadly ovate, 2–2.7 mm long, 1.5–2 mm wide, with sparse indumentum. Corolla subrotate, cream-brown to orange; tube 4–7 mm long, 3–4 mm diameter, glabrous except for short dense indumentum externally near the top; lobes lanceolate to obovate, 8–12 mm long, 3–5.5 mm wide, with short dense indumentum on both surfaces; corolline corona comprising 10 discrete lobes, 5 from between the corolla lobe sinuses and 5 alternating with the sepals, each lobe irregularly lobed and 2.5–5 mm long and 1.5–2 mm wide. Filaments c. 1 mm long and 1 mm diameter, glabrous; anthers lanceolate, 4.5–6 mm long, 0.8–1 mm wide, orange and with dense indumentum on back. Fruit a dehiscent woody follicle, 110–245 mm long, 10–15 mm wide. Seed flattened, narrowly oblong, 9–13 mm long, 1.5–1.7 mm wide, tan; comose from micropylar end, coma 25–35 mm long, white. **Fig. 1.**

Specimens examined: Queensland. COOK DISTRICT: Flinders Island, *Smyth* [AQ412660] (BRI); Fitzroy Island,

coll. 29 (MEL); Lizard Island, *Walter* (MEL); ditto, Dec 1974, *Specht & Specht* LI175, LI319 (BRI); ditto, May 1975, *Byrnes* 3193 (BRI); ditto, Sep 1988, *Batianoff* 10002 (BRI); Mt Surprise Creek, *Armit* 766 (MEL). NORTH KENNEDY DISTRICT: 3.5 km ESE of Fanning River Station, 19°45'S, 146° 20'E, Aug 1989, *Fell* 1923 (BRI); Mingela Bluff, 19°53'S, 146°45'E, Jan 1992, *Forster* 9418 & *Bean* (A, B, BRI, DNA, K, L, MEL, QRS); Sellheim, Sep 1943, *Blake* 15307 (BRI); Barrabas Scrub, W of Ravenswood, Apr 1943, *Blake* 14893 (BRI); Barrabas Scrub, May 1972, *Hyland* 6060 (BRI, QRS); 20°05'S, 146°55'E, May 1972, *Dockrill* 509 (QRS); 13 miles N of Charters Towers, Nov 1942, *Blake* 14672 (BRI); Mt Hope Station, W of home-stead, Mar 1987, *Bolton* 787 (BRI); Rochford Scrub, 25 km W of Ravenswood, 20°07'S, 146°37'E, Sep 1991, *Thompson* 217 & *Dillewaard* (BRI). BURKE DISTRICT: Eastern branch of Torrens Creek, Warang Holding, White Mountains, c. 37 km NNW of Torrens Creek township, 20°29'S, 144°48'E, Jul 1988, *Fell* 1360 & *Swain* (BRI).

Distribution and habitat: This rare tree appears to be restricted to localities in the North Kennedy, Burke and Cook districts of northern Queensland. Plants grow in deciduous vine thicket on soils derived from lateritic rocks, sandstone talus or quartzite, or in bendee-lancewood thickets on red lateritic soils.

Notes: The four species of *Wrightia* that occur in Australia may be distinguished using the following key:

1. Leaf lamina linear, linear-lanceolate or linear-ovate **W. saligna**
 Leaf lamina elliptic, elliptic-lanceolate, elliptic-obovate 2
2. Foliage with dense indumentum **W. pubescens**
 Foliage glabrous or with scattered indumentum 3
3. Leaf lamina with 6–11 secondary veins per side of midrib; corolla white
 to cream-yellow **W. laevis** subsp. **millgar**
 Leaf lamina with 12–18 secondary veins per side of midrib; corolla bright
 orange **W. versicolor**

Conservation status: *W. versicolor* is a rarely collected plant and is not common at localities where it has been collected during the last 20 years. Nevertheless, it is probably far more common than the available collections in herbaria would indicate. An appropriate conservation coding for the species is 3RC (cf. Briggs & Leigh 1988). It is present in the National Park at White Mountains.

Acknowledgements

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Fig. 1. *Wrightia versicolor*: A. habit of stem $\times 0.8$. B. bud $\times 2$. C. side view of flower $\times 2$. D. face view of flower $\times 2$. E. half flower $\times 2$. F. fruit $\times 0.5$. All from Forster 9418 & Bean. Del. W. Smith.

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